

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 065970
ORIGIN INR-07

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 SSM-03 OC-06 CCO-00 DODE-00
CIAE-00 NSAE-00 /027 R

DRAFTED BY INR/RNA/NE:AAVACCARO:CA
APPROVED BY INR/RNA:;HSTODDARD
SSM-CWKONTOS

-----260554Z 102462 /21

R 242303Z MAR 77
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO USMISSION SINAI

S E C R E T STATE 065970

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 280 - MARCH 24, 1977

NOT RELEASABLE TO FOREIGN NATIONALS

1. IN A MAJOR SPEECH TO THE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY, FOREIGN MINISTER FAHMY DESCRIBED PRESIDENT CARTER'S RECENT STATEMENTS AS "TRIALBALLOONS" TAILORED TO PREPARE ISRAEL AND ITS SUPPORTERS FOR DISAPPOINTMENTS. MOREOVER, HE CHARGED THAT EGYPTIAN MOVES TOWARD PEACE CONSISTENTLY ARE COUNTERED BY NEGATIVE ISRAELI ACTIONS AND CHARACTERIZED THE ISRAELI DEMAND FOR SECURE BORDERS AS AN "EXCUSE FOR ANNEXING TERRITORY." ECHOING RECENT STATEMENTS BY PRESIDENT SADAT FAHMY ASSERTED THAT EGYPT WILL NOT AGREE TO NEGOTIATE AWAY AN INCH OF ARAB TERRITORY. HE EXPRESSED ALARM OVER THE NEWEST ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN THE SINAI AND SAID THAT ALL ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS MUST "DISAPPEAR" IF THERE IS TO BE PEACE.

2. FAHMY'S REMARKS ON THE PALESTINIANS ARE PERHAPS MORE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 065970

NOTEWORTHY. HE STRESSED THAT THE PALESTINIANS ALONE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR RESOLUTIONS PASSED BY THE PALESTINIANS NATIONAL COUNCIL (PNC). (FAHMY'S ATTITUDE REFLECTS EGYPT'S FAILURE TO GET THE PNC TO DROP ITS OBJECTIONS TO UN RESOLUTION 242.) FAHMY ALSO REMARKED, IN EFFECT, THAT WHEN THE PALESTINIANS GET FAVORABLE SIGNALS FROM OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES, THE EGYPTIANS

"EXPECT THEM TO GET MOVING" AND RESPOND IN KIND.

3. ON THE GENEVA CONFERENCE, THE FOREIGN MINISTER STATED THAT IT WILL MEET THIS YEAR. HE PREDICTED THAT FOUR MONTHS OF HIGH-LEVEL CONTACTS WOULD BE NEEDED TO PREPARE FOR THE CONFERENCE. ALTHOUGH A FINAL SETTLEMENT WOULD NOT BE ACHIEVED IN 1977, HE WAS HOPEFUL THAT AGREEMENT COULD BE REACHED THIS YEAR ON THE OUTLINE OF SUCH A SETTLEMENT. ACTUAL DRAFTING OF THE AGREEMENT MIGHT TAKE SEVERAL MONTHS LONGER.

4. FINALLY, FAHMY OBSERVED THAT BREZHNEV'S RECENT STATEMENT ON THE MIDDLE EAST WAS POSITIVE AND TIMELY. "EGYPT HOPES", HE SAID, "THAT PRESIDENT CARTER WILL REPLY TO BREZHNEV'S VIEWS. FAHMY ALSO NOTED THAT DIPLOMATIC CONSULTATIONS WOULD PURSUE SOME OF BREZHNEV'S POINTS THAT NEEDED CLARIFYING. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

5. PALESTINIANS. IN AN INTERVIEW PUBLISHED IN LE MONDE, PLO CHIEF YASSER ARAFAT BACKTRACKED A BIT FROM HIS EARLIER RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT CARTER'S REMARKS ABOUT A PALESTINIAN "HOMELAND." ARAFAT STATED THAT HE REGRETTED THAT OTHER US OFFICIALS HAD MADE STATEMENTS THAT AMOUNTED TO A "RETREAT" FROM THE PRESIDENT'S INITIAL COMMENTS. (UNCLASSIFIED)

6. LEBANON. EMBASSY BEIRUT COMMENTED THAT THE SITUATION IN BEIRUT AND THE SHUF IS RELATIVELY CALM AT PRESENT, ALTHOUGH AN AIR OF TENSION PERSISTS. IN
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 065970

A FURTHER EFFORT TO REDUCE TENSIONS, THE LEFTIST NATIONAL MOVEMENT HAS DECIDED TO POSTPONE THE SCHEDULED DAY (MARCH 27) OF COMMEMORATION FOR JUMBLATT TO MAY 1, REPORTEDLY AT THE REQUEST OF WALID JUMBLATT.
(CONFIDENTIAL)

7. IN A CONVERSATION WITH EMBASSY TEL AVIV OFFICERS, ISRAELI TRANSPORT MINISTER YAACOBI INSISTED THAT PERES WILL CONTINUE TO RUN FOR THE PREMIERSHIP AND THAT, AS A RESULT, ANOTHER CONTEST FOR LABOR'S TOP SPOT WILL DEVELOP BEFORE THE END OF A NORMAL KNESSET TERM. MEANWHILE, PERES WILL ACCEPT THE SECOND POSITION ON THE LABOR ELECTORAL LIST AND WILL ENSURE A SIGNIFICANT POST FOR EBAN. YAACOBI ALSO BELIEVES THAT THE LABOR ALIGNMENT, HAVING BEEN HURT BY RECENT SCANDALS, WILL LOSE 5-10 KNESSET SEATS DURING THE ELECTION.

8. WELL-KNOWN ISRAELI DOVE URI AVNERI WHO IS ALSO A MEMBER OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE COUNCIL, TOLD

EMBASSY TEL AVIV THAT A POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RECENT PNC WAS ITS APPARENT APPROVAL FOR THE PLO TO PARTICIPATE IN NEGOTIATIONS AT GENEVA. AVNERI REMARKED THAT ARAFAT, DESPITE HIS HAVING FOUND IT NECESSARY TO COMPROMISE WITH HARDLINERS AT THE PNC ON SOME ISSUES, HAD THE SUPPORT OF THE MAJORITY OF THE DELEGATES WITH RESPECT TO PLO PARTICIPATION AT GENEVA. (CONFIDENTIAL)

9. SYRIA. ISRAELI INTELLIGENCE SOURCES HAVE INFORMED OUR TEL AVIV DEFENSE ATTACHE THAT THREE SOVIET SHIPS BRINGING NEW ARMS SUPPLIES HAVE ARRIVED IN THE SYRIAN PORT OF TARTOUS. THE IDF CONSIDERS THIS SIGNIFICANT BECAUSE THERE HAD BEEN A LULL IN SUCH SHIPMENTS AND SPECULATES THAT THIS COULD BE AN EFFORT TO "MEND FENCES" IN LIGHT OF ASAD'S PLANNED MOSCOW VISIT. IT IS JUST AS LIKELY, HOWEVER, THAT THE HIATUS AND RESUMPTION OF DELIVERIES REFLECT SEASONAL PATTERNS. (SECRET/NOFORN)
SECRET

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PAGE 04 STATE 065970

10. IRAQ. BAGHDAD RADIO ANNOUNCED LATE YESTERDAY THAT THE IRAQI BAATH PARTY HAS EXPELLED TWO GOVERNMENT MINISTERS FROM THEIR POSTS AND THE PARTY. THE MEN WERE ACCUSED OF NOT FULFILLING THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE PARTY AND THE GOVERNMENT. ALTHOUGH THE REASONS FOR THE SUDDEN MOVE WERE NOT GIVEN, IT IS LIKELY THAT THE MEN ARE BEING MADE SCAPEGOATS FOR THE SHIA RIOTS LAST MONTH IN SOUTHERN IRAQ. (THE CHIEF OF IRAQI INTELLIGENCE WAS EARLIER OUSTED FOR HAVING FAILED TO PREVENT THE DISORDERS.) THE DISMISALS ARE PROBABLY ALSO THE RESULT OF A CONTINUING POWER STRUGGLE AMONG THE PARTY LEADERSHIP. (CONFIDENTIAL)
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS, POLITICAL SUMMARIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 24-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE065970
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: AAVACCARO:CA
Enclosure: NOT RELEASABLE TO CONTRACTORS
Executive Order: X2
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770104-0184
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770324/aaaaavdi.tel
Line Count: 153
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 629d61b2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN INR
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: NOFORN
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NOFORN
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3004034
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INTSUM 280 - MARCH 24, 1977
TAGS: PINR, PFOR, EG, IS, XF
To: SINAI
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/629d61b2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009